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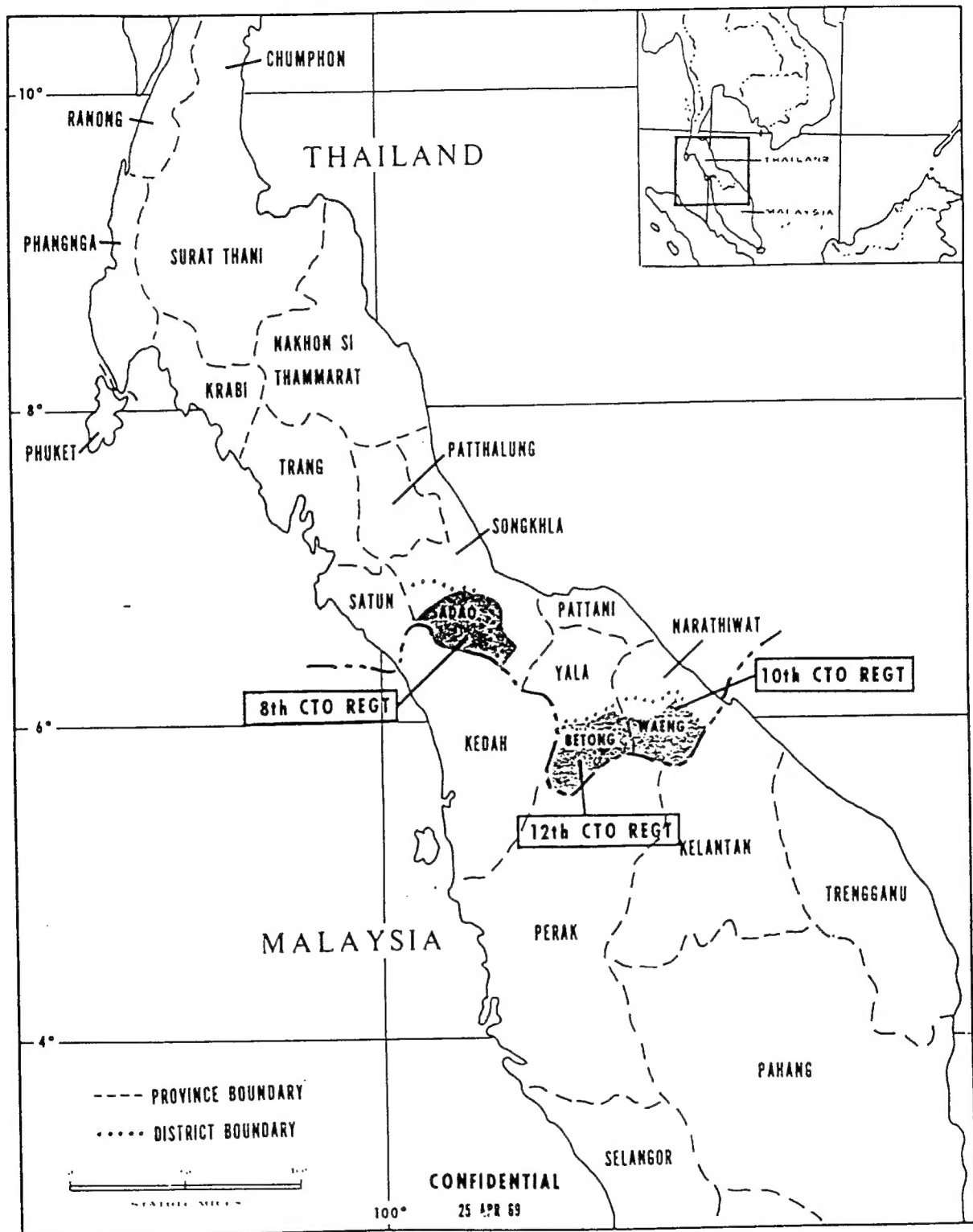
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SUPPLEMENT

INSURGENCY IN THAILAND'S MALAY SOUTH

~~SECRET—NO FOREIGN DISSEM~~



■ AREA OF INSURGENT ACTIVITY

~~SECRET—NO FOREIGN DISSEM~~

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INSURGENCY IN THAILAND'S MALAY SOUTH

Rising Communist terrorist strength in southern Thailand could -- if left unchecked -- eventually threaten government control there and in northern Malaysia.

The danger derives from activities by remnants of the Malayan Liberation Army, now known as the Communist Terrorist Organization (CTO). The CTO is well-established in the area and is already capable of attacking elements near its base areas with 100- to 200-man units.

The government has done little to suppress the group or to cooperate with Malaysia in carrying out counterinsurgency operations. The CTO, in turn, has not interfered in Thai affairs or been hostile toward Bangkok. There are signs the Thai attitude may, however, change if the CTO manages to continue its successful recruiting program.

The CTO is said to be actively organizing people in rural areas of Narathiwat, Yala, and Songkhla Provinces. It has established village organizations which parallel the governmental structure and, in many cases, supplant it. Over the years, the Communists have convinced the local Chinese and Thai-Muslim populations that they have their sympathy and support. Taxes are levied on Chinese businessmen, rubber-estate owners, plantation workers, and other groups to provide the movement with money. On the other hand, villagers loyal to the government are intimidated by assassinations and the public execution of police informants. It is estimated that some 100,000 people are under Communist influence; the population of the five southern provinces is 1.6 million.

The CTO is believed to have 800-1,000 hardcore members in the area. The government's noninterference policy allowed it to rebuild and replenish three "regiments." The 8th in the Sadao area has about 185 personnel, the 12th near Betong has some 500, the 10th in the Waeng District has approximately 175. Although the units have military designations, they are actually political organizations to which both political and military personnel

are assigned. They recruit quite openly. The CTO can also draw on about 2,500 unarmed sympathizers and supporters; 1,400 to 1,500 of them have received military training and represent, therefore, an active reserve force. Suborganizations of the reserve are the Malayan Communist Youth League (MCYL), voluntary associations, women's associations, and Young Vanguard.

Chinese still predominate in the CTO, but the number of Muslim-Thais and Chinese-Thais recruited has risen in recent years. As they replace aging Malay leaders, the movement may orient itself more toward Thailand and eventually align itself with the Communist Party in that country.

Nineteen incidents occurred in the first three months of 1969, as compared with 24 in all of 1968, and 17 in 1967. In addition, the pattern appeared to change -- from assassinations and kidnappings to armed encounters. Prior to this period, encounters usually occurred between the CTO and Thai-Malaysian security teams. By way of contrast, four of the nine incidents which set a monthly high in February involved only Thai Border Police. This suggests that the Thais are acting more aggressively and that they are becoming worried over the CTO's increasing strength.

Four understrength companies of the Thai Border Patrol Police (BPP) and three companies of Malaysia's Police Field Forces (PFFs) conduct anti-insurgency operations on the Thai side of the border. On the Malaysian side, there are four army companies, 13 PFF platoons, and a squadron of armored cars and artillery pieces.

All Thai police elements are short of personnel, particularly of officers and senior NCOs. Of the 27 BPP Platoons deployed, only three are commanded by officers. Platoons average about 20 men -- authorized strength is 36. A training program now in progress will, however, provide about 300 recruits for assignment in the area by late 1969. The army does not participate in counterinsurgency operations in the area, but it conducts occasional training exercises in remote areas.

Malaysia is far more worried about the CTO, since the threat posed is basically directed toward that country. As a result, it has deployed well-trained and -equipped troops to the border area. In 1968, it established a new command position, Director of Operations West Malaysia, to exercise authority over all police and military forces engaged in border operations. The incumbent, Lt Gen Dato Ibrahim bin Ismail, also commands the 2d Division. The rationale behind the new position was operational and psychological in nature. It was hoped that its establishment would underscore Malaysia's concern and persuade Thailand to give more than lip service to joint security operations.

Thai authorities are beginning to appreciate the danger, but counteraction against the CTO is difficult to implement due to the security situation in the North and Northeast. Another problem is that the vast bulk of the population in the affected areas are Muslim and Chinese. Thai authorities are unable or unwilling to communicate with them in their dialects. If antagonized by martial law, compulsory resettlement, or the presence of Buddhist army troops, the Muslims might reconsider their political future. Apprehension over latent Malay irredentism has, therefore, inhibited vigorous action by the government. Until recently, security-development programs, such as Mobile Development Units and Army Special Operations Centers, concentrated on combating the threat of Malay separatism rather than the CTO.

It is unlikely that Thailand will want or feel able to permit really effective joint operations against the CTO. As the number of CTO Thai recruits grows, however, the government's attitude may change markedly. During the past year, Malaysia brought increased pressure on Thailand to reinforce its border area units and to step up its counter-insurgency measures. Bangkok has, however, given no sign that it intends to lift strict limitations on Malaysian operations in Thailand. (~~SECRET NO FOREIGN DISSEM~~)